

From: Myron Ebell [Myron.Ebell@cei.org]
Sent: 11/25/2020 9:19:01 PM
To: Teller, Paul S. EOP/OVP [Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)]; Gunasekara, Mandy [gunasekara.Mandy@epa.gov]; Small, Jeffrey [jeffrey_small@ios.doi.gov]; Dannenfelser, Martin J. EOP/WHO [Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)]
Subject: Open Market: John Kerry, a Tall Climate Envoy

<https://cei.org/blog/john-kerry-a-tall-climate-envoy/>

John Kerry, a Tall Climate Envoy

- CEI Open Market
- Myron Ebell • 11/25/2020

Putative President-elect Joe Biden announced on Monday that he would appoint John Kerry as his administration's "special presidential climate envoy." The title is misleading: Kerry will not actually be an ambassador, which would require Senate confirmation. Instead, he will be attached to the National Security Council and treated as if he were cabinet-level, but without the bother of Senate hearings and a confirmation vote, which could be a quite painful experience for someone with Kerry's record. Pretending that Kerry will be a member of the cabinet is most appropriate; after all, the "climate crisis" is a pretend issue and international efforts to address it seldom reach even the level of pretense.

Mainstream media were quick to hail the appointment as an indication of Biden's seriousness about getting back into the international climate negotiations scene. The headline for *The New York Times's* [story](#) was typical: "With John Kerry Pick, Biden Selects a Climate Envoy of Stature."

Of stature? While it is true that Kerry served as Secretary of State in the Obama administration from 2013 to 2017 and as Senator from Massachusetts from 1985 to 2013 and was the Democratic Party's presidential nominee in 2004, all of which could indicate stature, I really think what the *Times* was getting at is that Kerry is tall. Kerry's height, plus his deep, sonorous voice, his monumental self-importance, and his famous aloofness give him a certain commanding presence. Otherwise, he's nearly as inconsequential as his long-time Senate colleague Joe Biden (who is also tall). Rather than itemize the numerous lowlights of his long political career (such as the disastrous Iran nuclear deal), let me give just one example that is relevant to Kerry's new job—his total ignorance of climate science.

The fact is that Kerry knows less about climate science than a person of normal diligence could learn on the Internet in an hour. Now, it is fair to note that politicians have to talk about a lot of things that they know nothing about. But Kerry has specialized in climate for decades. He was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 2009 to 2013, which held a number of hearings on climate. According to a *Washington Post* [story](#), Sen. Kerry represented the U.S. at every important U.N. climate conference, including the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 that launched the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (the underlying climate treaty), the 1997 Kyoto meeting that resulted in the Kyoto Protocol, and the 2009 Copenhagen conference that failed to save the planet. And he attended a number of other annual U.N. climate pow-wows. As Secretary of State, Kerry was in charge of the negotiations that resulted in the 2015 Paris climate treaty.

And yet, Kerry not only doesn't know anything about the basics of climate science; what he is sure he knows is wrong. Here is what I wrote in September 2014 about Kerry's understanding of the greenhouse effect—something according to the then-Secretary of State so “simple kids at the earliest age can understand this.” I hope he has learned something since then, but....

Secretary of State John Kerry Explains the Greenhouse Effect (*published September 16, 2014*):

One of the disturbing aspects of the global warming debate is that so many of the leading public officials who espouse alarmism know so little about the basics of climate science. I have seen many instances of ignorance over the years and have largely gotten used to it, but I recently happened on an example from Secretary of State John Kerry that astounded me.

Reporters and commentators noted that in his major speech on climate change given in Jakarta on February 16, Secretary Kerry claimed that “climate change can now be considered another weapon of mass destruction, perhaps the world's most fearsome weapon of mass destruction.” But reporters and commentators (including me) overlooked an even more remarkable passage in that long speech in which Secretary Kerry explains some “simple” climate science. According to the State Department's web site, here is an excerpt of what [Secretary Kerry said](#) about the greenhouse effect in Jakarta on February 16:

"In fact, this is not really a complicated equation. I know sometimes I can remember from when I was in high school and college, some aspects of science or physics can be tough—chemistry. But this is not tough. This is simple. Kids at the earliest age can understand this.

"Try and picture a very thin layer of gases—a quarter-inch, half an inch, somewhere in that vicinity—that's how thick it is. It's in our atmosphere. It's way up there at the edge of the atmosphere. And for millions of years—literally millions of years—we know that layer has acted like a thermal blanket for the planet—trapping the sun's heat and warming the surface of

the Earth to the ideal, life-sustaining temperature. Average temperature of the Earth has been about 57 degrees Fahrenheit, which keeps life going.

"Life itself on Earth exists because of the so-called greenhouse effect. But in modern times, as human beings have emitted gases into the air that come from all the things we do, that blanket has grown thicker and it traps more and more heat beneath it, raising the temperature of the planet. It's called the greenhouse effect because it works exactly like a greenhouse in which you grow a lot of the fruit that you eat here.

"This is what's causing climate change. It's a huge irony that the very same layer of gases that has made life possible on Earth from the beginning now makes possible the greatest threat that the planet has ever seen."

For those who followed former Senator Kerry at committee hearings over the past three decades, his belief that greenhouse gases are "a very thin layer of gases—a quarter-inch, half an inch, somewhere in that vicinity – ... way up there at the edge of the atmosphere" is perhaps not surprising. Nonetheless, it is remarkable that Kerry's explanation got by the highly educated State Department officials in charge of vetting the Secretary's prepared remarks.

Later in his speech, Secretary Kerry made the usual sneering remarks about people who don't think that global warming is a crisis: "President... Obama and I believe very deeply that we do not have time for a meeting anywhere of the Flat Earth Society." I suspect that were Secretary Kerry to find the time to attend a meeting of the Flat Earth Society, his presence might lower the level of discourse.

Myron Ebell
Director, Center for Energy and Environment
Competitive Enterprise Institute
Mobile: (202) 320-6685
Stop Continental Drift!